The Memory of Past Births

By Charles Johnston, M.R.A.S.

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CHARLES JOHNSTON, M. R. A. S.

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PREFACE.

By reading the title, The Memory of Past Births, you have already taken the first step towards remembering, for you have sowed in your mind the seed of an idea which will germinate and grow till at last it blossoms into full knowledge. Of those who receive this thought of endless life through many births, most accept it at once with a conviction which runs ahead of evidence; many hold it tentatively with gradually growing credence; none altogether reject or forget it. The thought remains, the seed stirs and grows, and as rebirth is a true law of life, every turn and incident of life gives it new force, till at last belief ripens into certainty. That certainty of the larger life wherein the lives and deaths of this our world are but as days and nights, lightens the burden of death, dulls the edge of sorrow, takes away the terror of separation. Immortality, the dearest hope in every human heart, becomes once more credible and intelligible; nay more, demands and compels our belief. We begin to catch the light of our immortal selves, the gleam from beyond the heavens which shall illumine our hidden past, and, still greater boon, bring clear vision of the path before us, winding through the mists and shadows of the valley, till it rises at last into the everlasting sunshine.

C. J.

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CHAPTER I.

How the Teaching Came.

When reincarnation is spoken of, one question is invariably raised —If I have lived before, why do I not remember it? The defenders of reincarnation almost invariably evade this question, or give vague and unsatisfactory answers; so that, while almost every one who once grasps the thought of successive lives on earth feels strongly inclined to adopt it, still this one point has remained a stumbling-block, and in all the years reincarnation has been talked of nothing definite or to the point has been said as to this really vital question.

The idea of reincarnation came to the Western world only a few years ago. It was first clearly presented in an attractive and sympathetic form in the "Fragments of Occult Truth" which Mme. Blavatsky published some sixteen or seventeen years back in *The Theosophist*.

The idea in the "Fragments" was this: To understand our lives, to know what lies before us after death and what lay behind us, before birth, we must begin by a better understanding of ourselves. We are not body only, but soul and spirit as well—the soul half earthly, half heavenly; the spirit, as yet, almost unknown to us.

The soul is everything between the body and the spirit—the passions, as well as the pure will; the desires, as well as the love of beauty, and truth, and goodness. To the lower half of the soul the "Fragments" gave the name: the Body of Desire, while its higher half was called the Mind.

The soul is drawn downward toward the body by the Body of Desire, and then the animal in us comes out and fills our lives with passions and appetites. The soul is drawn upward toward the spirit

by its higher part; then genius, and power, and beauty, and faith are developed—the true qualities of human life. In the fullness of time, death comes. What happens then? or, first, what has happened at the moment of death?

First, the body has been separated from the soul; the body, with all that network of instinctive and elemental powers in it, which built it up and carried on its work during life, and which now pulls it to pieces again, in dissolution. But, when the body is laid aside, the soul is not all pure, any more than it was a day, a month or a year before, while its life still lasted on earth. The soul has its worse half still clinging to it, passions, pictures of lust and appetite, unsatisfied longings for sensuous things, and the sins of malice, selfishness and self-love, which make up so much of ordinary human life.

The soul is, as it were, surfeited with these passions—clogged like a heavy feeder after too rich a meal. It cannot rise at once to spiritual life. Almost immediately after physical death the soul comes to itself, rid of its pains and sickness, and with a feeling of lightness and vigor, resembling the vigor of keen health and high spirits. The vesture of mortality has been laid aside, but there is often no clear consciousness that death has actually taken place, and this only comes after repeated attempts to talk to the living people so recently left, who are still vividly present to the person just dead.

But this vivid touch with earthly life lasts for a few hours only, or a few days at most; then the scenery round the soul begins to change, the passions and desires begin to assert themselves and gradually work themselves out through a period of purification, which is at the root of the teaching of Purgatory. The spirit draws the soul toward its strong, pure life; but the soul, overburdened with passions, cannot at first respond. It must gradually put off the earthly desires, and, apparently, is still in contact with the living world, in the sense that it has a consciousness of the nearness of living people. And the "Fragments" suggested that any strong bond of affection toward people still in the world would keep the soul of the dead person close to them, and conscious of them; and, so far as lay in the power of the soul, it would help and protect the living.

Then, in the course of days, or months, or years, according to the

strength of its earthly desires, the soul shakes itself free from its bondage and puts off the Body of Desire. The passions become latent and are as seeds in the dried and withered flower. The higher part of the soul is drawn back into the spirit, and the radiant power and strong, pure will of the spirit pour into it, and breathe new life and vigor into the soul's dreams of beauty, inspirations of goodness and strivings after truth. That is the soul's great holiday and day of refreshment, when all the pains of this mortal life are laid aside.

And the "Fragments" further suggest that, as our spirits are far more intimately united than our bodies, so the souls of those who are truly bound together are keenly conscious of that bond and union, in the great rest they enter into, when the Body of Desire is put away. To that rest of the soul, the "Fragments" gave the name of Devachan, a Tibetan word meaning "the Blissful," and one well known in the books of the northern Buddhists. It was the idea of Devachan more than any other teaching which made the fortune of the "Fragments of Occult Truth." There was something in this teaching, at once so reasonable and so sublime, so unlike the material heavens of the churches, with their gold and stones, their trees and rivers, and yet something so satisfying to our best aspirations that one could not help believing that something like it must be the truth.

The spirit in us, standing close to divinity, has a power and immortal youth; an eternal vigor, that is the very heart of joy; and a wide and sweeping knowledge that almost reaches omniscience. As the soul puts away its garment of desires it rises up to union with the spirit in Devachan, the Blissful, and is thrilled through and through with the spirit's exultant and immortal youth. All that the soul had in it, of beauty, and truth, and goodness, is kindled into rich and vigorous life; all aspirations are satisfied; all hopes of heaven are fulfilled; all dreams of joy are more than realized.

Then the soul bathes in the waters of life, and is strengthened and refreshed. As the measure of its aspiration, so is the measure of its reward; every hope in it, every seed of hope, blossoms out into a perfect flower, under the sunlight of the spirit and its vivifying rays. And as the souls of men are of every different measure of aspiration, so is the Blissful Rest different for each. Every soul forms its

own Devachan, through its own powers and energies, reinforced and strengthened by the energies of the spirit. And that life in Devachan is the soul's great opportunity to rise to new aspirations, to receive new seeds of beauty and joy, which shall in their turn blossom in the time to come. Drawn thus close to the spirit, the soul shares the spirit's greater life and receives the seeds of hope, the ideals of future growth, which are to guide and stimulate it when it returns again to this earthly life.

But the soul does not only receive from the spirit, it also gives to the spirit; brings to it the harvest of its best hours in life; the knowledge it has won; the sense of the beauty of the world; the sense of human life, with its loves and its efforts; the sense of toil well done, of difficulties overcome. For if the spirit soars angelic above our life it is thereby cut off from many a secret that every mortal knows; and these are the messages it learns from the soul in return for the power and peace it breathes over the soul in paradise.

That paradise of peace and power may last as long as a full human life; it may last thrice as long; no years are given for us to measure it by, but it will not end until there has come fullness of refreshing and a rest from the memory of human ills.

The radiance of rest becomes slowly quiescent; the overshadowing light and power of the spirit become dim in the soul which has drowsed itself with peace, and as the spirit draws away, the breath of the returning earth begins to stir and move in these seeds of desire which were left when the flower of the last earth life withered.

Gradually the earth's vitality works in these germs of desire, of passion, of lust, of selfishness and self-love till the soul is once more tinged and colored with them, and, like drawing to like, enters once more the confines of the earth. There its affinities draw it to that land, and class, and family whose life is most in harmony with its own nature; and, uniting itself to the body of an unborn child, it presently passes again through the gates of birth. The first seeds of earthly things to come to full life in it are the elemental and simple powers that man shares with the animals, almost with the plants. Then, gradually, the more human side of the soul, the passions as well as the understanding, come to their growth, and a full return to

human life is once more made. Thus come childhood and youth; and then once more, age and death.

The "Fragments of Occult Truth," and the additions made to them afterwards, did a great deal more than merely sketch this course of a single human life, a single cycle of rebirth. They carried the teaching on and applied it to the whole of human history, even supplying chapters which we have no knowledge of, yet which seem to have a certain rightness and reasonableness, which we are greatly inclined to admit.

It was said that the whole development of humanity had been nothing but the repeated rebirths of the same human souls; that we, who now live and breathe the vital airs, are the same men and women who lived through the Middle Ages, the days of chivalry and religious zeal, in France, in Spain, in Italy, in England; that we are the same men and women who peopled heathen Germany, and Scandinavia, and Russia, in the days of Thor, and Odin, and Perun; that we ourselves, and no others, saw the fall of the Roman Republic, the degeneracy of Greece, the last days of the Jewish nation, and had, perhaps, a part in the great transition that passed from Judea to the Greek and Roman worlds; that we ourselves played a part in the growth of Greece and Rome, in the glad old strenuous days of inspiration and liberty; that we have opened our eyes to the daylight, in Assyria and Iran, in more ancient India, and Egypt, and Chaldea; and in older days, to us very dim and mysterious, but bright enough, and real enough, while we actually lived them.

Instead of going back, as I have done, the "Fragments of Occult Truth" began at the utmost horizon of the past and came down to our own days, outlining no less than four great races, before our own epoch, and the race which now inhabits the earth. The first two races were dim and shadowy as forgotten dreams, but growing gradually more gross and material as the long ages went on. Finally, with the third race, came such material life as we ourselves are used to, though much, even in our purely animal nature, has been steadily modified and changed. Of this third race, we were told, there are hardly more than a few fragments left, and those debased to the utmost limit of degeneration.

The fourth race, whose memory is still held in the story of Atlantis, the vanished continent now hidden beneath the waves, sent out many races, whose descendants, mingled with offshoots of the earlier third race, inhabit the lands and continents we know. From the mingling of the third and fourth races came the fifth, our present humanity—the strong, progressive members of the race. Of pure remnants of the fourth race there were, we were told, a few still to be found among the inland Chinamen, who, with the flat-headed aborigines of Australia, were relics and vestiges of a vanished past.

The third race had natures hardly yet fashioned to the mould of humanity as we know it; with them instinct had not yet become passion, nor had the almost automatic acts of animal life yet fully changed to conscious reason. They were blameless, because they had not reached any keen sense of responsibility, or even of their own individual lives.

The fourth race developed a strong individualism, and with it gained great power over nature: a conquest of material forces, the metals, the powers of wood and stone, of iron and silver and gold. With these material surroundings came a hardening of the inner nature also, and the faults of selfishness, of cruelty, of ambition. And so the fourth race fell, and Atlantis sank in the ocean.

Then came the fifth race, with its task, to rise again from materialism; to hold the consciousness of the fourth race and the sense of individual life, but without cruelty or too keen self-love; to regain the innocence of the third race, without its ignorance, and to add new powers and perfections undreamed of in the earlier world. In that fifth race is our own place, and that destiny is being unfolded in us.

To the fifth race are to follow others, each adding something new and excellent, until mankind is perfected; and when this cycle of life is ended, and this earth of ours is ended with it, there are other greater cycles and nobler worlds on which we, the self-same souls, are destined to find our fuller growth, our larger joy.

Thus the "Fragments" suggested to us our place in a great and orderly development, all the races of our planet filling parts in the same scheme, each supplementing the others and bringing some

power, or skill, or knowledge, or instinct to the total sum, which without it would have been by that much deficient.

Each of us, we were told, had passed through every race, and time and clime; we were the Chaldeans, the Egyptians, the Indians; we were the ancient Romans, the Greeks, the men of the Dark Ages; of the Renaissance, of modern days. And thus, once more, we were brought to the question: If we really had such ripe and abundant experience, how is it that we remember of it not a single fragment; not one colored patch of the Nile, or the Euphrates; not a single Atlantean day; no memory of Babylon, or the Khalifs, or Chivalry?

This question was answered in a sense, but the answer was not satisfactory, or, at any rate, it had nothing like the clearness and definiteness which won such instant recognition for the teachings of the "Fragments," especially when they appeared in a volume, with many additions, as "Esoteric Buddhism." Still, in this great and wonderful scheme of the races there was much to commend itself very strongly, even though it could hardly be verified or proved in any positive way.

There was, first of all, in proof of our identity with the men of those old races, our keen interest and understanding of their works and ways; the infinite patience, the infinite eagerness, with which we strive to decipher every fragmentary sign and inscription they have left; and the fact, too, that we can decipher these old sign-pictures, though they seem obscure as the riddles of the gods. Everything in the life of all races and all times is vividly akin to us; even the holiday crowds in the museums are constantly bearing witness to our affinity with the days and the lands that are dead.

Then again, the scheme of the "Fragments" made more intelligible the lingering presence of low and abject races among us, like the Bushmen, the Veddahs, or the Australians. These are the dwellings of belated souls, laggards in the race, who have yet certain lessons to learn, that nothing but the wild life of these wanderers could teach them. And when the laggards have learned their lesson the belated races will assuredly disappear. As there are souls in all stages of growth, as souls are many-sided things, so must there be many races of many kinds—white and yellow, red and black—to give them the

scope and opportunity they require. And we can never tell how lately we ourselves inhabited other colored skins. So we should be very tolerant in this matter of color.

Once more, we find that the races supplement each other in a marvelous way; that the work of the temple-builders of Egypt was carried on, and perfected, not in Egypt, but in Greece; that the chants of the Persian fire-worshippers have won a new life on the lips of Christian choirs; that the thoughts of the old Indian sages were caught up and given a beauty and vivid grace, by Pythagoras and Plato; that the work of Praxiteles and Apelles was handed down to Raphael and Titian; that Michael Angelo is the kin of Phidias; that Euripides wrote for Racine; that Æschylus was the prophecy of Shakespeare. And that, in one and all, there was something added; a new development; a fresh unfolding of the leaves of the flower of humanity, that, like the blue champaka, shall one day bloom in Paradise. So all races supplement each other; none has a perfect gift; but each lends aid to every other. In this way, too, we see how wise it is to look on the whole human race as but one great assemblage of souls, ever perfecting the great, mysterious work.

There is for the whole race and for each of us a certain path to be trod: a certain large and perfect growth to be reached; a gradual development, through endless change. And it follows, in the simplest way, that the position of any one on the great path depends very definitely on the distance he has already traveled; if he has gone so far, in the days that are dead, he is now at such a place; if he has lagged, he is further back; the strenuous and courageous are further in advance. So, where we shall be to-morrow, a year hence, or ten years hence, depends on where we are to-day, and whether we still keep moving. And we see, very clearly, that races and men get on by their own works, and not by the works of others; every one must do his own walking on the world's great way; there is no such thing as hiring substitutes. So that we may say of the life of any one, that his position is pretty strictly and justly due to his own walking in bygone days, and that his position to-morrow will depend on the use he makes of to-day. We build our own lives; we are our own fortunes; we weave our destinies for ourselves. This is the law of Karma.

There are parts of this great law of Karma that we should like to linger over; above all, the matter of sex, and the great question of poverty and riches. Of the first, the teachers of the "Fragments" suggest that all souls, to gain perfect experience, must live the life of both the sexes; just as each of us must in every life inherit childhood, youth and maturity; just as each of us must taste both birth and death. As to poverty and riches, the question is too large to touch on here; but we must rest assured that here, too, essential justice is done.

We should try to see the matter in this light: There is but one great assembly of human souls; all are alive at this moment; none of them are belated or caught in the net of bygone ages; all are present in the life of to-day. But of these, a quarter, perhaps, are now embodied on the earth; three-fourths are hidden in the heavens, in the paradise of peace, or in the dim halls of desire, through which men's souls pass on their journey back and forth from outward life.

And this same assembly of souls was present through all the yesterdays of the world, and will be present in every to-morrow. Our life is one great life, of which we are all parts; time is our pathway, and the whole earth our inheritance.

Yet that question obstinately recurs: If I, who move and live in the world to-day, who get such sincere satisfaction out of life and all experiences, have indeed passed through so rich and varied days and years and lives, why does no memory of it all remain? Why can I not recall how I tilted in the lists in mediæval days; how I prayed in Gothic cathedrals; how I hunted the deer through gloomy Germanic forests; how I shouted for Cæsar or Brutus in the Forum; how I saw the plays of Sophocles, and heard old Homer sing? What has become of my lotus garlands of Egypt, my part in the old temple processions on the Nile, my share in the sermons of Gautama, or the caves of Ellora and Elephanta? If I, indeed, and no other, moved in the days of Atlantis, where the seas now roll, or in yet older lands, where the sand-storms sweep over desert Tarim and Gobi; if I shared the fate of dim, gigantic races, before Atlantis was, why can I not recall a day of it? Why is my memory as empty of purple hours as a beggar's cloak in the rain?

What said the "Fragments"? Well, they answered something

like this: The memories of all those past births are still in your possession, every one of them; but they are hid and carefully packed away in remote corners of your being, whither you hardly find your way, even in dreams. But when the day of attainment dawns for you, those memories shall be yours; at the end of the way you will be able to look back to all past stages of your journey.

Well, that was satisfactory enough in a way; and yet, with all that, pretty unsatisfying. We do not feel like waiting for the day of our attainment, at the end, perhaps, of the seventh race; we should like to realize a little of all that great wealth of ours; like the Friend from India, on whom every one was pressing hundred-dollar checks, we feel as though we should like a quarter in hard cash, on account.

This is clearly the most interesting point of the whole question: The memory of past births; and we should like to learn something more definite about it. Now, as it happens, there is a good deal that may be learned. All the world, including even the Christian world at one time, has held to this great teaching of Reincarnation, and all the world has run up against this fascinating and exasperating question of lost memory. It has been thought out in India, in Egypt, in Greece, in Italy. And I think I shall be doing a good work in bringing together the chief passages that bear on the subject, from the Upanishads, from Buddha, from Plato, from Synesias, from Virgil. They have all had something to say; and it has generally been well worth saying.

I shall add the testimony of the living to the witness of the dead; we may be lesser than the admired sages; but we have this advantage, that we are here, at the moment, and hold the stage in the present hour. Though that thought of the ever-living assembly of souls, one-fourth manifest on earth, three-fourths hidden, yet none the less living, in the heavens, should warn us against speaking slightingly of the mighty dead.

Let me anticipate for a moment, and say that to our question, Why do we not remember our past births? we shall get this answer uniformly from the ages—A good many do and always have remembered.

CHAPTER II.

The Tradition of the East.

The teaching of past births comes to us from the East, and most of all from India. How then did the Indian teachers face the problem which we have spoken of—the blank pages of memory for all the illimitable past which was unrolled, before our latest descent through the gates of birth? Why do we not remember our past births, in the view of the Indian sages?

To answer this question, we shall have to ask the one which precedes it, namely, What did the sages of India teach concerning rebirth; and what is it they conceived as reborn? And we can do this best and most satisfactorily by taking in their order the passages in the Indian sacred books in which rebirth is taught.

To begin with, we are met by a very general misconception, which practically runs through all that has been written by students of Indian lore: the belief that we owe the teaching of rebirth to the Brahmans, the great hereditary caste of priests and scholars who loom so large on the Indian horizon, and who have kindled the imaginations of so many generations of foreigners visiting India in search of secret wisdom. By looking deeper into the Indian books we shall find that, so far from originating the teaching of rebirth, the Brahmans for the whole first period of their history confessedly knew nothing about it; that it was already well known even then to another race in India, and that it was taught, on a definite historic occasion, by this other race to the Brahmans.

The older race who taught the Brahmans was a red race, kin to the inhabitants of ancient Egypt and Chaldea: and it is among the descendants of this red race that we find the clearest conception of rebirth, and of the whole teaching which makes up the subject of the Mysteries. From whom this ancient race received its tradition, we cannot tell; but the suggestion constantly put forward, in India as in Egypt, is that their teachers were a race of demigods, or divine beings

in human form; the representatives of man before the fall; and that from this divine race, the teaching of rebirth has been handed down in unbroken succession to the present day. And for this reason we have the teaching of rebirth complete, even though there is no vestige of memory of their beginningless past in the minds of those who are born into the world.

The books which contain the tradition of the Mysteries, as handed down to India by one branch of the old red race, are called the Upanishads: that is, the Books of Secret Teachings, or Hidden Wisdom; and there are two chief passages 'n the Upanishads which deal with the teaching of rebirth. The first of these is in a passage which is traditionally known as the Lore of the Five Fires; because, in it, the worlds above this, through which the soul passes in its descent into birth, are spoken of as fires. There is, first of all, the higher celestial world, the paradise of peace, where the soul has rested through long years, after its last birth; and in this world, the soul is an immortal and angelic being, above the waves of birth and death, free from the shadow of sorrow and pain. When the time for the new birth comes, we are told, the gods offer up the soul as a sacrifice in the fire of the celestial world, and from this sacrifice, the lunar lord is born. This is a simple allegory in the old mystery language: the gods who offer up the soul are its own inherent powers, its unfulfilled destinies, its attractions to other beings alive on this earth, its own thirst for further physical life; these offer it as a sacrifice; dying out of the celestial world, it is born into the psychic world, the midworld between earth and heaven.

The lunar lord is the psychic body; and all through the mystery teachings the moon is used as the symbol of the psychical world. This in part because the moon, as cause of the tides, is regent of the waters—the waters being the commonest symbol of the psychic realm, and in part because the waxing and waning of the moon represent the great law of alternation, which rules everything psychic, and appears in our human life in the alternating emotions of pleasure and pain, hope and fear, sorrow and joy. The lunar lord is the psychic body, the personal self, who lives through the life of the emotions, and whose keen sense of being is due wholly to the alternation of

emotion; since any one emotion continued indefinitely would bring a sense of numbness, of total absence of that keen feeling which is the very life of the personal self. Therefore sorrow and fear are as much the food of the personal self as are hope and pleasure; since the one can never be separated from the other.

From the psychic world, the borderland between earth and heaven, the soul passes downwards to the physical world, which is called the third fire, through the intermediation of human parents, who are the remaining two of the five fires. To enter into a fuller explanation of this symbolism of the fires, and the part they play in birth, would carry us away too far from the main theme; but it may be said that this apprehension of bodily life as a fire, or radiant energy, and its further analysis according to the color of the flames, is a part of symbolism which runs through the whole tradition of the Mysteries, from the remotest ages to the present day.

In the passage we are quoting from, the actual earthly life of man is embraced within a sentence as brief as an epitaph: He lives as long as he lives, and so he dies. Then we come to the brief description of the Indian rite of burning the body, and we are told that the soul rises from the pyre in a vesture the color of the sun, and passes upwards again through the three worlds.

And here we are met by another great part of the mystery teaching: the teaching of the difference of destiny after death. There are in reality three paths open for the soul which has just left the body, and these three paths depend wholly on its inherent quality and spiritual treasure and attainment. For those whose imaginations have been wholly set upon earthly life, and who have never caught a glimpse of the Beyond, nor any gleam of the celestial light that shines to us from the back of the heavens, their destiny is, to be born again almost without an interval; to begin a new earth-life, as soon as the former earth-life is ended.

Those who have been full of aspiration, of religious longings for happiness in a better world; whose imaginations have been full of pictures of heaven and glory to be won and enjoyed by themselves, are carried upward on the strong stream of their aspirations, and ascend once more through the regions of the psychic world, in their

order according to their remoteness from earth and nearness to the higher and more spiritual worlds. Their aspirations are a body of forces, as definite as those wrapped up in the seed of a tree, which will bring forth an oak, a beech, or an elm, according to their inherent character, and thus give birth to a life that may endure for generations. And, as the whole growth of a huge forest-tree is stored up in a minute seed, and lies hidden there, in a web of invisible forces, so the soul carries its future with it, in the germs of its aspirations and desires.

But these aspirations and desires were formed for the personal self by the personal self, and therefore they are not devoid of the element of egotism, of self-centeredness; they cling around the personal self, and depend on it. And they are mixed with other desires, for more material happiness, for more earthly joys, to be satisfied only by a new return to earth. So that the soul full of religious aspiration for the personal bliss is yet bound; it has not escaped the cycle of necessity, the law of repeated birth. Drawn up by its aspirations to the verge of the celestial world, it is irradiated by the spiritual light, and opens and expands in that light as a flower expands in the sunshine. Then for generations or ages it bathes in the joys of satisfied aspiration, with a full sense of personal bliss and illumination, until the hour strikes for it to be born again. This comes when the store of aspirations and upward longings is worn out, expanded like the life of a tree, full grown and ready to fall, and so the soul falls again through the realms of the psychic world, and passes back again through the gates of birth, to begin once more the cycle of earthly life.

Here we see one reason for lapse of memory, for the blank pages of the new-born soul. For at the moment of death, its mind-images were of two kinds, spiritual and material; and the force which was locked up in the spiritual thoughts has already been released and exhausted in the long rest of paradise, bearing its fruit there, in a splendid vision woven of the very best of the life just lived. The material mind-images have remained latent during the repose of paradise, and in the form of germs of force, comparable to the tree while yet in the seed, they await the returning soul,

and join it as it approaches the gates of birth. These material images and tendencies form the forces which impel the soul into its new body, and which spin themselves into the web of a new bodily life, thus exhausting themselves just as the spiritual forces exhausted themselves in paradise. Thus it seems that the memories of former births, whether spiritual or material, whether of aspiration or desire, are actually worked into the substance of a new existence on this earth or in paradise; so that they no longer exist in the form of memories, and cannot therefore be remembered, in the same way as we remember the events of the day before yesterday. They are not present as memories, in the sphere of the new personality, just as what happens to a father is not present in the memory of his son, though it may and does work most vitally through the son's life.

To take a simple simile, and one which is thoroughly in harmony with the language of the Mysteries, throughout all ages, and in all lands. The former life is like a plant, which completes its growth, and reaches maturity. It comes into flower, and all the essence of the plant is transformed and glorified in the blossom, with new and splendid coloring, form, and odor—all strange to the plant, and yet formed of its essence. This flowering is the life in paradise where, under the radiance of the spiritual sun, all that was best and most vital in the soul is transformed and expanded into a glorious life, and puts forth new and spiritual powers quite strange to the natural man, and yet springing from his being, or rather from that being and inwardly working soul which has put forth the mortal man into the human world.

But the matter does not end with the flower; there are the seeds also; and these seeds will in due time bring forth a second plant of like nature with the first, and ready in its turn to burst into splendid bloom. The seeds are the material germs which rest within the soul in paradise, and, when its time of blossoming is done, bring it back again through the gates of birth. And seedtime and harvest go on forever. So is it with the life of man. But, as the former plants are not present except in spirit, in the new plant, so the former lives are not present in the form of material memories, which might be recalled like the events of a few days or months ago.

There is yet a third destiny: the path of Liberation; and this, rather than the way of rebirth, is the essence of the Upanishads, and of the whole Mystery teaching. Instead of faring forth along the cycle of necessity, there is another destiny open to the soul, and this its own true and proper destiny. The soul is not by right a timeless wanderer, but a present immortal; a divine and creative being; an undivided part of the everlasting Eternal. And it is within the will of every man at any time to claim his heritage; to pass out from the ranks of men who die to be reborn, and to join the host of the immortals, and share in the wisdom and power of the Divine. And this entry through the doorway of the Sun is the true Initiation into the Greater Mysteries, an initiation which finds man mortal, and leaves him an immortal.

For those who have passed through the door of the Sun there is no return; their destiny lies elsewhere; they are no longer on the path of the Fathers; they have entered the pathway of the Gods. The whole message of the Upanishads is the discovery of this way, the tradition of it, and of the powers and immortality it brings. And it is only as leading up to this higher way, that the teaching of rebirth has a place in the Upanishad teaching.

And now we come once again to the question of the memory of past births. We can trace a strong and unchanging tradition all through the books of the Mysteries, to the effect that one of the first fruits of the higher way, of the true initiation into life, is a memory of former births, down to the minutest and most distant details. In the Upanishads this teaching is rather present by implication than explicitly stated; it is said, again and again, that he who has entered into the Self, and thereby become immortal, knows all things; that he is lord of what has been and what shall be; that he shares in all the wisdom of the Eternal. But, in the great Upanishads, the particular command of the past implied in a knowledge of former births is not definitely mentioned, though we can easily trace the tendencies which make it an inevitable conclusion.

It is only when we come to the first great Indian revival of the Mystery teaching, under Krishna, that we have a clear and explicit statement of the fact that this memory of past births is real. The

tradition of India places this revival at a point just five thousand years ago; and it is constantly suggested that there is a definite and precise cyclic relation between that period and the present day. In virtue of this cyclic link it is the lot of the present age to see given out broadcast, in the ears of all men, teachings which have formed a part of the Mysteries for ages, and one great historic presentment of which was due to the Rajput sage Krishna, five thousand years ago.

Krishna teaches quite clearly the doctrine of rebirth, following the lines which we have already traced from the great Upanishads, and using the symbolism of the fires, the moon, and the sun, which we find everywhere throughout the mystery books. He also teaches, with especial grandeur and force, the splendid reality of Liberation; of our heritage of present immortality, our divine and celestial destiny. And, speaking of the cycle of rebirth, he says that this same doctrine was taught by him in the beginning to the Solar Lord —the genius of the great red race which, in Egypt, Chaldea, and India, handed down the teachings of the Mysteries from earth's earliest dawn. This teaching, he says, was taught by the Solar Lord to Manu, and by Manu to Ikshvaku, the progenitor of the solar dynasties in Ancient India; and in the heart of this Solar race, the race of the red Rajputs, the Mystery doctrine was faithfully preserved.

Arjuna, also a Rajput, and the disciple of Krishna, vainly tries to comprehend this hard saying, and answers: "Later, Master, is thy birth, while the birth of the Solar Lord was earlier; how then am I to understand that thou hast taught him?" And Krishna replies: "Many are my past births, Arjuna; and also thine. But my past births I remember, while thine thou rememberest not."

This passage from the fourth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, or Teachings of Krishna, is the earliest specific and indubitable mention of the restored memory of past births, in the Sacred Books of India. When we come to the next great revival of the Mystery-teaching, under Prince Siddhartha, of the Solar line—known to the religious world as Gautama Buddha—we shall find this tradition expanded and given out in its entirety; so that we shall have even a perfectly specific and clear explanation of the psychological method by following

which any man can remember his past incarnations. After touching on the Buddhist tradition in the matter, we shall have to complete the theme by taking the few though quite definite allusions in Plato and the classical writers, together with the one remarkable passage, "Before Abraham was, I am," so nearly identical with what the sage Krishna answered to Arjuna, many centuries before.

To finish the subject, as it refers more especially to the main stream of occult tradition, we shall have to enter on another mystery doctrine: the fourfold being of the soul; for it is only by understanding this that we can see exactly where the memories of the vanished past are stored, and why it is that, lost to mortal man, they are restored again to man the immortal, as one of the fruits of initiation.

St. Paul speaks as an Initiate when he tells of the regeneration from the psychic to the spiritual body, and then speaks of the spiritual body as "the new man, the lord from heaven." He is using a form of speech as old as the human race, and which only the tradition of the Mysteries can help us to understand. The threefold man is overshadowed by the highest Spirit, the infinite Eternal; ever spoken of in the tongue of the Mysteries as the Sun; therefore it is that initiation is spoken of as "entering in by the door of the Sun." The threefold man thus overshadowed is made up of the natural self, the psychical self, and the causal self. The natural self, the man of animal instinct and appetite, dwells in the physical body, the vesture of earth, perpetually dissolved and perpetually renewed under nature's law of never-ending mutation. The psychic self, the man of emotions, of hopes and fears, of pains and pleasures, of doubts and expectations, dwells in the psychic body, which, though subject to time, is above the limits of space, dwelling in a world where space has no place, as space is of the material world alone. Above these two, which are subject to death, is the causal self, the immortal, in the causal vesture, above both space and time. And man the personality stands between the two: the animal self below, and the causal, divine self, above; he is swayed by the one or the other, drawn downwards, or upwards, according to the alternations of his will and fate.

If he be overcome by the downward tendencies, and allow the human soul to sink altogether into animal sensation, then the psychic

body takes on the likeness of the physical, and is formed in its image. But if the divine bears down upon man, and carries him up, from the world of sensation into the world of Life and present immortality, then the psychic body takes on the image of the causal body, and the man consciously rises above death, which will be for him not even a break of consciousness, but simply the putting aside of an outer body, he being meanwhile conscious, and exercising full volition in a psychic body not subject to space. And it is this turning or conversion of the psychic body, as vesture of the human soul, which St. Paul so magnificently describes: "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in strength; it is sown a psychic body, it is raised a spiritual body."

The causal and immortal self, with which the man has now identified his destiny, is overshadowed by the one Eternal; the infinite Ocean of Life; the Sun, after whose shining all else shines; the Soul of souls. The causal self stands in the midst of other selves, individual souls like it; and a part of its destiny is to establish true and divine relations between "thyself and others, myself and thee." Again, the causal self has, as a part of its task, to guide the lives which make up the chain of incarnations; it disposes all things wisely throughout endless years; it is the divinity which shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will. Therefore the causal self is the lord of past and future, the guardian of the whole cycle of births. And now we come to our definite answer: the memory of past births is preserved, it is true; but it is preserved only by the causal self, the immortal; and it is only in proportion as we inherit our immortality, and consciously rise above the barriers of time, that we can possibly inherit the memory of our past. While we are still confined in all our thoughts and hopes within the natural self, and only dimly conscious even of our psychic life, it is impossible for us to have any more memory of our past than the beasts that perish; and our memory of the past is exactly measured by our foresight for the future; if we cannot see forward to our immortality, we cannot see backwards to the dark abysm of time from whence we came.

When we rise above instinct to emotion, we already come under the shadow of our brooding past; we are ready to apprehend the

truth as to our endless births, but we are not yet ready to hold any clear and definite memories. These can only come with the next step, when we pass above the limits of the psychical, and rise into the real realm of spirit and causal life. And this is equivalent to saying, what will be perhaps more readily intelligible, that we cannot perceive the memories of past births so long as our whole minds and hearts are preoccupied with the present birth, the present day, the present hour. Add that almost all men living in the world bear about with them a heavy burden of material hopes and fears, and that they are so wholly wrapped up in these that there is no possibility of their seizing and steadily apprehending any other form of mind-image; if they are not even conscious of their present souls, how can they be conscious of the soul's remote and vanished past? It is like something we have all noted, without thinking of it: at a magic-lantern performance we see the colored pictures on the screen, one after the other, images of lands and cities and men; but if the gas be suddenly turned up, or the daylight be allowed to pour in, the picture on the screen instantly becomes invisible, even though it is still there exactly as before, and even though precisely the same rays from that picture are entering our eyes, just as they were while we saw the picture. So the emotions of each new birth crowd out the memories of births gone by, and therefore we cannot remember them. They are of a finer quality, a different order of mind-images; and the coarser and nearer blot out the finer and more remote.

It is, once more, just as in the case of a palimpsest, where some medieval monk or scribe has taken an old parchment with lines of Homer or Plato, or some of the divine old Greeks, and, erasing the large utterance of the early gods, has written on the parchment his own thoughts of a baser and more common day. We can only recover the old by overlooking, and in part sacrificing, the new. The first writing on the palimpsest can be brought out, but the later writing will lose its clearness and sharp outline in the process.

It may be asked of what profit it would be if we did remember our past births, and what we lose in losing them. The answer is: to most men it would be no profit at all; it would simply weaken their hold on the present, without giving them any hold on the Eter-

nal. For while still learners in the infant-school of the world, they can only grasp the forever through the now, and are therefore endowed wholly with brief and ephemeral desires. For them it would be loss rather than profit to remember their past; therefore the law, which disposes all things wisely through endless years, has decreed that they shall not remember.

But when the sense of our immortality is borne in upon us, and thus gradually loosens the tyranny of the present, it is different. Then comes the time for us to be reminded that we have lived before, that we shall live again. And there are always witnesses in the world to remind us, for the tradition never dies away utterly from the hearts of men.

And when, under the leading of the brooding Soul, we have remade ourselves in the likeness of the divine, drawing ourselves forth from time's cycle to the quiet presence of eternity, the time comes for us more fully to remember; to see the life of to-day, not separate, but taking its place in the perfect chain, ranged with the lives that have gone before, all leading up to the everlasting; when man the mortal is ready to be initiated into present immortality, then comes fuller memory; then Krishna, type of the regenerate soul, replies: "Many are my past births, Arjuna, and also thine; mine I remember, though thine thou rememberest not."

CHAPTER III.

Where Memory Dwells.

We compared the enigma of forgotten births to a magic lantern show, where the picture can only be seen when all other lights are cut off; we saw that though the light from the image on the screen, carrying every detail of color and form, may even enter the eyes of the spectators, and paint on their retinas just the same picture as before, yet they will see absolutely nothing, nor have any proof that there is anything to see, until that light shines alone, unbroken by any other ray.

This simile carries the very spirit of the Eastern sacred books, and brings us to a cardinal point in all their teaching: a point constantly mistaken or overlooked. They hold this teaching, and the view suggested by this simile, not only in regard to the single power of recovered memory, but for the whole range of the divine powers of the soul, for all of man's immortal heritage. For the sacred books never teach what they are often thought to teach, that divine and occult powers are some abnormal outgrowth, to be painfully acquired by the personal man while still wearing the vesture, and still bound by the straitened limits, of his personality; something to be used by him as adornments and conveniences of his mortal life—a mere embroidery to his threescore years and ten.

They do not hold that the high gifts of magic are to be used chiefly to astonish and entertain the friends of the magician, nor to help him to make a material success of his present life. The true inner teaching of the East is so different from this, so much higher than this, that its would-be interpreters have often failed to grasp it altogether, and have fallen into one grotesque mistake after another, as a result of this failure.

We must try to gain some firm hold of this first great principle,

or all our further studies will be in vain. We must first try to understand and constantly keep in mind that the Eastern doctrine teaches that the soul of every man is already perfect, and perfectly endowed with all its infinite powers, being one with all other souls in the highest life; so that no growth is possible for the Infinite; nor any gain thinkable for that which is the limitless all. What we can do is, not to add to the powers of our souls, but to come to some perception, dim and vague at the first, of the tremendous powers our souls already possess. We are not the patrons of the soul and all its magical powers, to develop this, and call out that, as the humor takes us, and at last to turn the whole into a means of complacent self-glorification. We are rather humble beneficiaries of the divine Life; quite unable to save our souls, which need no saving; yet by great good fortune not debarred from the possibility that our souls may save us.

The soul of each of us, through its own inherent and divine nature, already stands above the ocean of birth and death, above time and space, above pain and sorrow. These things, and the whole material world which seems so real to us, are not necessary and real, but rather accidents and flaws in the real Life; they are not the light, but rather the clouds and vapors which reveal the light, by cutting it off, by breaking its even flow, by absorbing this quality and that, and thereby showing the remainder as other than the pure, unbroken ray.

With our low and material habit of thought, we are accustomed to hold, and will in most cases very confidently assert, that without time and space and matter there would be no real life, but rather a thin abstraction, an unthinkable void, a beatitude little distinguishable from extinction. These thoughts, and the illusions they deify, are the very outer rays of our simile, which keep us from opening our eyes to the revelation. While we are attuned only to that coarser vibration, to those lower sounds and grosser colors, we shall never catch a glimpse of the finer light from beyond the heavens, nor any echo of the music of the spheres.

We shall best understand the matter, perhaps, by laying theory aside, and seeing in what way we do, in fact, rid ourselves of the

bonds of time and space, of the dull burden of matter; then we shall see more clearly whether that deliverance is a loss or a gain; a weakening, or the beginning of strength.

Space is the first and grossest illusion; the deadly fear of separation is its true moral expression, its real value in the science of life. It is the belief that so many miles of land or sea, so many dead yards of mountain or of rock, must of necessity cut off all intercourse even between souls in perfect union and accord; so that out of sight is really out of mind; or, even worse, absence is presence of regret and the sense of loss. And the black and deadly shadow of this illusion, its supreme hold on the heart of man, is Death; that fearful shadow of final separation, for which there is no hope, no cure, no pity, nor any possibility of warding off the swiftly approaching and inexorable doom.

That is what we get from the seeming reality of space; and no human heart endowed with intelligence and feeling will hold that it is a great and excellent boon. And now for what we gain by our first victory over this illusion: it is not that we are robbed of space, shut out from it, and barred within a world where no space is, but rather that we come into possession of space, into mastery over it, so that our souls can feel, and our wills can act, not only where our bodies are, but also wherever we have a link of unity and communion, in the heart of a friend. It is not mere nearness in space that makes kinship. Friendship is not so cheap as that. It is rather a direct and immediate intuition of oneness, a glow and enthusiasm of love; the present sense of another living soul felt directly by the soul in us, and only interpreted, but never generated, by the outer senses. And with our first victory over the illusion of space comes the knowledge that this direct and intuitive touch of soul with soul, of will with will, of heart with heart, this sense of another living being at one with us, is not weakened or barred by space, but is as strong and vital, as immediately present to us, whether a mile, a hundred, or ten thousand, divide heart from heart.

The truth is this: For the psychical life there is no space; space is purely and solely material. In the psychic world, separation comes through difference of quality, difference of vibration, difference

of love, and not through difference of place. Therefore where there is union, there is immediate presence and contact, even though bodies be held apart by untraveled leagues of ocean. As soon as our imaginations cease to be filled with the image of our animal bodies, and are more rightly occupied with a sense of our human selves, we begin to live in the psychical world, and thereby we begin to conquer space. And for all mankind, this beginning has been made ages ago, so that any simple animal life, pure as the animals live it, has long been impossible for man. But our psychic being is so disordered, so chaotic, so full of dark images and evil imaginings, that we possess ample psychic powers without knowing we possess them; and great misery and sorrow are our reward.

Animals know neither the misery nor the sorrow of the human heart; even these are testimonies to our divinity. They are in truth the shadows of our powers; the shadows they, in their august coming, cast before them. For we feel the misery of separation because the voice in us says there should be no separation; and the discrepancy between intuition and fact is our sorrow. But the fact is a mere material shadow, cast into the psychic world, where it has no true right, nor proper place; and only our corrupt animal life leads to our obsession by these ghosts and phantoms of the long past material world.

The conquest of animalism, the inheritance of true human feeling, brings with it the awakened sense of other human lives, the splendid intuition of other present souls. If we are true to that, setting the soul in others higher than the animal in ourselves, and living rather for the soul, we soon have our reward. Though hills and valleys intervene, they do not intervene between soul and soul; nor in any degree weaken the immediate, conscious, and living touch of one with another. We are rewarded for our faith by inheriting a larger life which space cannot touch; which death itself no longer threatens. But we must find the souls of our friends now, if we would hold them to us hereafter. We must never be content with a mere acquaintance with their bodies; much less with those images of them we build up for our own prejudices and desires, making all men in our own likeness. And this power to feel another soul, as it lives in

itself, and not merely as it ministers to us, is the beginning of all wisdom, the first step in all true illumination. With that most excellent gift, we can in time learn all secrets. Without it, the tongues of men and angels, all knowledge and all mysteries avail us nothing.

This is the first victory over space, over the dullness and brute resistance of the material world. It is the divine power of seeing and feeling souls, by immediate intuition. That power, like the rest, is not designed merely as a convenience and adornment of our material life; it is rather the open door to a life which shall in time wither up the last veil and vestige of the material world altogether. We can inherit this vision of soul and soul, not by some miraculous unfolding to be painfully acquired, but by the far greater miracle, which has been from the beginning, in virtue of which all souls are forever one. For all souls are but doorways into the Eternal, and each doorway gives entry to the whole mansion of the Most High.

Therefore true soul-vision is to give us the realization in the beginning, of the vivid and intimate life of the rare souls with whom we already have perfect kinship and communion; but in the end, it is to give us a realization of the life of all other souls without exception or abatement in any regard, whether it be with the chiefest sinner or the brightest saint. Not all pure souls only, but all souls, whether high or low, gifted or groping in outer darkness, are one with the Supreme, and therefore one with us. And for the realization of this one vital truth all sins and crimes will be forgiven; while the spotless saint who lacks it is as one of the damned. This is the divine and everlasting law. This is life's morality, whatever may be the morality of the sects.

That is what is meant by the victory over space. It is a victory over the whole brute world of darkness, which is enslaved to space, and the entry into a divine and miraculous life, where each soul may be infinitely enriched by inheriting the life of all other souls as enlargements of his own; gaining the universal without losing individuality; not exiled from space, or shut into some heaven beyond the confines of the wholesome and living universe; not overcoming space in any way like that, but rather overcoming space by

possessing all of it; by gaining the power to conquer separation, to work anywhere in space where lives a soul of man.

This is the true victory over space, as the Eastern Wisdom teaches it. It is no loss nor diminution, but an infinite gain. And the victory over time, which brings as one of its first fruits the memory of past births, and with this knowledge of the past, a knowledge of the future also, is a victory of kindred nature.

Once more we shall set aside all theories as to what time is, and whether it exists in itself or is a shadow of the mind; we shall let theory rest, and paint rather the steps by which the victory over the time-spirit is in fact won. The means of the victory are the same; a slow rising above the tyranny of our sensual natures—of that in us which demands unceasing sensation, endless stimulus, whether it be the lust of the flesh or the lust of the eyes. The essence of the lust of sensation is always the same; it is a demand for fulness of life, for the sense of vivid being, not through any inherent energy or activity in ourselves, but from impressions made from without; from sensations made on our nerves by the material world. And we gradually attach the idea of one and another sensation to this or that part of our bodies, till our imaginations are full of the sense of palate or ears or liver, or whatever organ we rely on for our outward excitement. It is this clogging of the imagination with coarse bodily and material images which enchains the soul within the body and hinders it from soaring to its own proper and divine world; it is this slavery to bodily images which makes us serfs of space, in which our bodies must take their place among the rocks and trees and all other things in the material world.

In much the same way are we made slaves of time. The lust of sensation lies under a curse, the outcome of a law everywhere operative in the material world. It is this: a stimulus of a certain character produces its maximum effect at the first impression, and with every recurrence loses force. It therefore follows, with all the insistence of physical law, that we must either increase the stimulus, to get an equally strong sensation, or, if we are limited to a certain measure of sensation, we must be prepared to see the effect weakened with every repetition. So that we shall have at last one of two things:

either the numbness of total insensibility, or a series of constantly strengthened doses, which will finally shatter the physical frame altogether. There is no third alternative. The hospitals are full of proofs of this law, which should be written in golden letters over the threshold of every temple of man.

Thus it befalls that we come under the dominion of time. For it is only a question of time when any given sensation will either wear itself out or wear us out. And the final wearing out is death. Half of mankind go through the later years of their lives as mere living sermons on decrepitude; on the deadening and dulling which comes from the lust of sensation. All mankind preach the final sermon by their deaths, a sermon far more impressive in its silence than the doleful message of mortuary services, and the word of the sermon is this: if we identify our thoughts, desires and affections with the body of matter, subject to dissolution, we too must die.

Change is the law everywhere throughout the material world; all things once brought together must again be separated; all things separated will one day be brought together. The mountains have been heaved up from the ocean depths; they are once more worn down by fine water drops and carried by the rivers to pave the ocean bed. So it is with all matter. Change everywhere; and time is nothing but the record of gradual change. Therefore all that is subject to change is subject to time. Time is not a benefit or reward we are shorn of when we reach beatitude; it is a doom, under which we and all things lie.

And we conquer time by turning back within ourselves from the lust of sensation; from servitude to material things, subject to death; but our first advance inward does not lift us altogether above time, though it lifts us above space. From sensation we turn to emotion; from the physical we turn to the psychic body, and try to find our life there. And this is in truth a wonderful gain, for with the transference of our imagination to the psychical body we triumph over space, that is, over the doom of separation. Emotion and thought, feeling and imagination, do not fill space; they are not subject to space, nor can space intercept or check them. And when we once break down the walls of selfishness and aloofness, we can

touch with our emotions the lives and wills of others, and in our turn become recipient of theirs. Yet emotion comes under time's sway. It is under a law as imperious as that which dooms sensation, yet of different character.

For emotion is of such nature that, like sensation, it soon numbs the soul, and the soul will no longer feel the same excitement or stimulus from the same intensity of emotional impression. Its remedy is alternation. To one emotion succeeds another, of opposite character; to hope, succeeds fear; to fear, hope. To sorrow, succeeds joy; to joy, sorrow. Such is the law. And this succession, like all change, is a form of the time-illusion; it is in virtue of time that succession is possible. Therefore the soul, when it first sought contrasted emotions, built itself the garment of time, to receive them in. So that, even when we rise above animalism to human life, we are still time's slaves. We must rise yet further, to be free.

Above sensation we enter the life of emotion; above emotion we enter the life of the will, creative, immortal, divine. At last we have a form of life coming from within, and therefore coming under neither doom. It is not dependent on successive impressions from without, therefore it is not under the doom of ever weakened stimulus from successive sensations. It is not dependent on alternation, as emotion is, therefore it is not, like emotion, subject to time. Nor is it under the doom of continually weakening effect, which emotions share with the grossest forms of sensations, and which is also a part of their inheritance in time's curse.

The creative will finds its life not in reception from without, but in activity from within. It draws its energies from an immortal source, since the will in us is at one with the infinite Life, and is, in very truth, our doorway to Life, and that life eternal. In the will we live; in sensation or emotion we die. The law is fixed and certain. The Eastern teaching of the will is this: there is for every man a genius, a divine power, an individual embodiment of the infinite Life, which stands above and behind his personal life, and is united with the personal life by all his best and highest powers and intuitions, but most of all by the will. The mission of every man is to embody the life of his genius in himself; to rise into the life of

his genius, and thereby to become immortal. His genius will command him to work, and to work in three ways. The first of these is the subjection of the material world, through the will in him, as expressed in his physical powers. And all the arts and sciences are nothing but this: the subjection of Nature to the will in us, in subordination to an intuition of power or an inspiration of beauty. We take earthly materials, colored clays, ochres, resins, oils, and mastering their character and qualities, we mold them by our wills into pictures embodying the human soul, and the beauty it beholds. And so we are destined to conquer all nature, and mold all to the divine uses of the will.

The second work of the will is infinitely more difficult than all sciences and arts put together. It is the true adjustment by our wills of the balance between ourselves and all other selves: the arrangement of relations of power and joy between all living souls, such that, though all be different, yet all shall be perfected in the One. That is our second task; and we need only to listen to the promptings of the will, in every human relation, to find the true and divine adjustment in every case. But in this task, there is no room for cowards. Much now deemed of lasting and universal validity will be condemned by the will; and we must have something of the spirit of revolutionaries, if we would undertake to make all things new. The fruit of the first work of the will is a perfect mastery of science and art. The perfect mastery of the far greater art and science of human life is the second fruit. There is yet a third.

After all has been said of Nature's beauty, of the wonderful powers and miracles that lie hid in her every part, there remains this to say: all these beauties and powers are but weak copies, dim and vague reminders, leading us back from Nature to the infinite Soul. There is where our heart's hope dwells. And so with mankind, with our other selves. When the last word is spoken, what is it in them which draws and delights us? What, in fine, is it which makes any communion and common consciousness at all possible? It is the presence of the common soul, in us as in them and all things. We are at the last driven back from individuals to their source, the one Soul, wherein all are one. And the union of our separate selves with that

immortal and infinite All is the last and highest task set us by our wills. In the will is our peace. This is the door of immortality and power, not some dim survival beyond the grave, in a vague and shadowy heaven, but a present sense of our life immortal, here and now; something more certain and nearer to us than the shining of the sun or the beating of our own hearts.

Therefore the victory of the will, the determination to live in will and work, and no longer to live in emotion, raises us above both space and time; or, to speak more truly, lifts us above the awful fear of separation, the ever-present dread of death. This is the shutting off of all outer lights, which alone makes possible the visible shining of the inner light. When darkness has come, when we have passed into the silence where enter neither sensation nor emotion, we shall grow receptive of the finer light, and, as our eyes grow accustomed to that truer radiance, we shall slowly perceive the measure and character of our newly inherited powers.

This is the essence of all the great religions of the East, and, if this thought be kept in mind, it will be easy to understand them all; really to comprehend and grasp the splendid thought of Liberation which inspires them all. This is the doctrine of the Mysteries, old as humanity, old as life itself; for this is the teaching of the Life. It is the realization by the will, of the present immortal in us; the victory over time and space is the reward carrying with it an endless extension of our powers.

As we rise above time, we first break away from the sense of uncertainty, of the separation of our life into single days, any one of which, it seems, may be our last. For this separated and broken sense of life we substitute a sense of our life as a whole, a necessarily continuous being, whose length depends not on a fortunate escape from accident and sickness, but on an inner necessity and law. We grow into a sense that our life is a whole, a single unity, not a mere collection of fragments; and we come to understand that the life of this whole is inviolable. This is the dawn of immortality, the knowledge that we are not subject to the caprice of Death.

As the light grows, our knowledge and power grow with it. We come into a sense of our lives as outside time's sway altogether, as

subject to death rather from a false association of thought, from false imagination, than from real necessity; and with that thought comes the sense of a future conquest of death, final, triumphant, complete. We gain a grasp of our separate lives as no longer separate, but as only the days in our longer divine year, with the nights of rest between; and the long vistas before us light up, with definite conquests to be gained, definite tasks to be performed, definite powers to be won.

And with this lifting of the veil from the future comes a like unveiling of the past. It draws in, comes closer to us; the vast tracts of desert oblivion that divided us from our dead lives begin to shrivel up and disappear, and the very remote becomes near and familiar. As the images of bodily sensations remembered and desired, the coarse brute pictures which made up so much of life begin to lose their insistence, the finer images of our longer life flash out upon us from the darkness with sudden brightness and color; pictures perfect in life and motion, carrying with them images of form and voices and names, which fill us with a strange sense of our own identity therein; a knowledge that these remote and unfamiliar things have befallen us.

Thus returns to us the memory of past births. And there are to-day, as there have always been, many who remember. One need only ask, to find men and women who have a clear and definite vision of things that befell them in other lives. I have known many who could tell, and were ready to tell, the right inquirer. Let me give details of some of these. One remembered clearly a temple ceremony in a shrine hollowed out between the paws of some great beast, telling even the form of the landscape and color of the sky as he had seen them, when looking back through the door. He described, without knowing it, a scene in ancient Egypt, for the shrine is cut out between the paws of the Egyptian Sphinx—a shrine of which he knew nothing, remembering only the clear picture, but having no sense of where it was. He also had a quite clear vision of a hillside in India, a memory belonging to yet another life; and his description here was equally vivid and true.

Yet another spoke of many lives remembered, one including a

scene in a temple in inner China, where a ceremony of the Mysteries was being performed. He had a clear sense of his own place in the temple, of the words spoken, of the ritual carried out. And he also had definite memory of two other births, with details of names and places, vivid as if they had happened yesterday.

A third remembered places and names, down to minute and often bizarre and unexpected details, of seven consecutive births. And all of these were in a continent other than that in which the present personality was born. One birth, the place of which was remembered with especial accuracy, had been verified as to local color and circumstance by the man himself; another had fallen in a land he had never visited, but local details of which were familiar to me.

Let these three cases stand, taken at random from many. They show that it is with the memory of past births as it was a generation ago with apparitions; it is impossible to raise the subject in a general audience, without finding some one who remembers something; and whoever goes further, and asks among the students of mysticism and occult philosophy, will soon meet with quite definite and clearly marked memories, in such abundance as to bring the matter outside the region of doubt or conjecture, altogether.

A moment's consideration will show that it is exactly among the mystics that we should seek, though there are often startling exceptions to this rule. For the mystics are those who have begun to overcome the coarser vibrations of life; to struggle against the tyranny of sensation; to live from the will, rather than from material things. And this, as we saw, is the necessary condition. For only thus does a man blend his consciousness with the consciousness of the body of will, the causal body, which is immortal. And, as we saw, it is in this immortal body, and here alone, that the pictures of past births inhere.

Therefore to inherit this, as to inherit all the divine powers of the Soul, there is only one way: to become one with the Soul, and with its nature; to enter into the pure and vivid life of the will; to live from within, by inherent and divine energy, and not from outer sensations. And this is the very essence and heart of the Eastern teaching. "When all desires that dwell in the heart are let go, the

mortal becomes immortal, and enters the eternal; knowing all things, he becomes the all." This from the Upanishads. And Buddhism, at the other end of the long pedigree of Indian wisdom, teaches the same thing:

"If a disciple, or disciples, should frame this wish: 'Let me call to mind many previous states of existence, to wit, one birth, two births, three births, four births, five births, ten births, twenty births, thirty births, forty births, fifty births, one hundred births, one thousand births, one hundred thousand births, many destructions of a world-cycle, many renovations of a world-cycle, many destructions and many renovations of a world-cycle, so as to say: I lived in such a place, had such a name, was of such a family, of such a class, had such maintenance, experienced such happiness and such miseries, had such a length of life. Then I passed from that existence and was reborn in such a place. There also I had such a name, was of such a family, of such a class, had such maintenance, experienced such happiness and such miseries, had such a length of life. Then I passed from that existence and was reborn in this existence'—thus let me call to mind many former states of existence, and let me specifically characterize them, 'then must he be perfect in the precepts, bring his thoughts to a state of quietness, practice diligently the trances, attain to insight, and be much alone.'"

Between the extreme brevity of the Upanishad and the absolute completeness of detail in the Buddhist Sutra the whole Eastern doctrine is given here. But to appreciate fully the moral and spiritual meaning of the last sentences we should have to go deeper into Buddhism, and there we should find that the requirements set down here cover the very thing we have spoken of: the raising of the mind above sensuality, which imprisons the imagination in the animal body, and above selfishness, which imprisons feeling in the personal self; for both these limitations are barriers to real life, and only with our entrance into real life can we begin to inherit the powers of our divinity—and among them the memory of former births, which belongs not to the mortal, but to the immortal man.

CHAPTER IV.

How to Remember.

The oldest of occult teachings of India are the Upanishads: the Books of Hidden Wisdom. After them, according to the venerable tradition of the East, comes the great development of the Secret Teaching which culminated in the revelation of Krishna, and which finds its greatest monument in that most mystical of scriptures, the Bhagavad Gita, the Songs of the Master. Halfway between Krishna and the present day comes the great Rajput prince whom the religious world of the East knows as the Buddha, of the clan of the Gotamas, and of the Shakya race.

These three great unfoldings of the Wisdom Religion correspond to three stages of the teaching of rebirth, and therefore of the memory of past births. The great Upanishads, occupied before all else with establishing the present intuition of the Soul, the Power which wells up in the individual being of all men, and into whose bosom all men must return, speak little of rebirth, laying down merely the outline of the teaching and never lingering over the details. The law of continuous moral energy, in virtue of which rebirth is a necessity, the three modes of rebirth, according to the preponderance of the material, the psychic, or the spiritual nature in the man to be reborn, and the teaching of rest in paradise between birth and birth, are all clearly set forth; after that, the particular application is left to the disciple himself, as a necessary exercise for his opening spiritual faculties. In harmony with the same principle the Upanishads do not lay stress on the memory of past births; they teach the necessity of this memory more as a part of a general illumination than as a particular end to be held in view; we have to infer their views, rather than to find them ready made. The Upanishads teach that when all desires that dwell in the heart are let

go, the mortal becomes immortal, and enters the Eternal; that the Eternal, with whom the mortal is now at one, is lord of what has been and what shall be; master of past and future alike. From this it follows as a necessary deduction, but only as a deduction, that the man who reaches adeptship, in this union with the Eternal, must of necessity regain a knowledge of his past births, as this is a part of that omniscience to which he is now heir. But nearer than that the great Upanishads do not go.

The Bhagavad Gita, representing the work of a later age, though an age which is still five millenniums distant from us, if we are to accept the tradition of the East itself, is much more detailed and definite; at the same time it loses much of that grand and universal sweep, that magnificent width and power, which distinguish the Upanishads from all other books. The Bhagavad Gita speaks far more explicitly of former births: Many are my past births, Arjuna, and also thine. Mine I remember; thine thou rememberest not.

There is no such explicit statement as that in the great Upanishads; but even in the Bhagavad Gita the memory of past births, and, what concerns us most directly now, the teaching how to remember, are rather held in the background, kept subordinate to the much greater theme: how we are to reach liberation.

It is only when we come to Buddhism that we meet with full detail; with such a richness and profusion of definite statement, indeed, as rather overwhelms than illumines us. For an overrichness and luxuriance of imagery, illustration, comment, analysis, are everywhere through Buddhism, the result of the tremendous moral and intellectual stimulus impressed on the minds of his age by the Rajput prince of Kapilavastu. In the Buddhist books, the doctrine of rebirth is the main motive of a whole class of teachings: parables which point their morals, not by some imaginary history like the good Samaritan or the unjust judge, but by incidents avowedly taken from former lives of the Buddha himself, and in which the subordinate parts are assigned to the hearers present, their moral, social and physical characters in their present births being explained by their actions and aspirations, good or evil deeds, in lives gone by.

This form of birth story, which, we cannot doubt, was in the first

instance really used by the Buddha to illustrate the laws of life, and especially of continuity of moral force through birth after birth, became such a favorite with his followers that in time they found it difficult to tell a story otherwise than as an episode from a former birth; all their fables of animals are molded in this form, and relate that, in such an age, under such a king, the Master was a hare or a tiger, or a crane, and that, in his animal embodiment, such and such incidents befell. Their romances even take the same form; for instance, the tale of Temiya in Burmese, or of the lady Visakha in Pali, both of which turn on destiny as molded by our own former acts, and both of which go into the amplest detail, leaving nothing at all to the imagination, but supplying the equations of moral action with more than mathematical precision.

This luxuriance, this rank abundance even, is only the outward and visible sign of the perfectly definite teaching as to rebirth which the Buddha did undoubtedly hand down to his disciples; and, though we cannot trace the fullest directions for the recovery of lost memories to the Buddha himself, yet there are passages among his teachings, among the teachings attributed to him personally, that is, which make it absolutely certain that he did give his disciples quite definite rules for the acquirement of this marvelous power. Let me quote one such passage previously given in this series:

"If, devotees, a devotee should desire thus: 'Let me call to mind many previous states of existence, as, one birth, two births, three births, four births, five births, ten births, twenty births, thirty births, forty births, fifty births, one hundred births, one thousand births, one hundred thousand births, many destructions of a world-cycle, many renovations of a world-cycle, many destructions and renovations of a world-cycle, saying: I lived in such a place, had such a name, was of such a family, of such a caste, had such possessions, such joys and sorrows, and such a length of life. Then I passed from that existence, and was reborn in such a place. There also I had such a name, was of such a family, of such a caste, had such possessions, experienced such joys and sorrows, and such a length of life. Then I passed from that existence and was reborn in this existence. Thus let me call to mind many former states of

existence, and let me precisely define them'—if he should so desire, he must be perfect in the precepts, bring his emotions to a state of quiescence, practice the trances diligently, attain to illumination, and dwell in solitude."

Let me begin by saying that one such passage as this, and there are hundreds of them, settles once and for all the controversy whether the Buddha taught the persistence of individuality through the line of rebirths, and settles it in the affirmative. "In such a birth, I was such a one," implies the identity of ego from first to last. Next, we must note that this teaching is offered only to certain people, and not to all indiscriminately: to the devotees, namely, those who have taken their refuge in the Buddha, in the Law, and in the Communion; who, like their lord, have renounced the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh. This limitation is exactly equivalent to what we saw before: that the memory of past births can only come after a weakening of the tyranny of the actual, of the present birth; just as the magic-lantern picture can only become visible by shutting out the daylight, or turning down all other lights. We must lose our view of our immediate surroundings if we are to catch the views of other scenes and other climes, mountains, cities and seas, which the magic-lantern can paint upon the screen. Therefore we shall find Buddhism always offering these directions to disciples only; to those who have overcome the tyranny of the world; for these alone could profit by the teaching.

We may then note that the things touched on as remembered first, pictures of places and names, are just the things which, in point of fact, people do remember first, as in the cases of several people personally known to me, who have recovered fragments, or even large portions of their heritage of memory of the past. And finally we are to remember that the directions specifically laid down, such as practicing the precepts, attaining illumination, entering the trances, point in the direction in which it is inevitable they should point: namely, the conscious existence of the immortal self, in that causal body from which all rebirths come forth.

We could further bring out the points in this passage, and illustrate the precise moral and mental actions which it prescribes

to the end of remembering the past, by showing at length what are the precepts to be practiced, what is meant by entering the trances and attaining to illumination. For each of these we have abundant material; but it seems better to turn at once to another passage of the Buddhist scriptures, where the directions for remembering past births are given with a precision and definiteness which simply leave nothing more to be imagined or desired.

This passage is from the Vishuddhi Marga, or Path of Purity, a great work written some sixteen hundred years ago by the famous sage, Buddhaghosha, whose name signifies the Voice of the Buddha, the revealer of the Buddha's teachings. Our passage is part of a commentary on a sermon of the Buddha, a passage very like that which we have just quoted; and it is intended to give more ample and detailed instruction as to the meaning of the very points we have touched on: the precise moral and mental acts to be carried out by those who would remember. It is rather lengthy to quote in full, but I shall try to leave out nothing essential to a sound understanding of the method laid down:

"There are six classes of people who can call to mind former states of existence: devotees of other sects, ordinary disciples, great disciples, chief disciples, separate Buddhas, and Buddhas.

"The power possessed by devotees of other sects to perceive former states of existence is like the lamp of the glow-worm; that of the ordinary disciple is like the light of a small lamp; that of the great disciples is like the light of a torch; that of the chief disciples is like the light of the morning-star; that of the separate Buddhas is like the light of the moon; that of the Buddhas is like the thousand-rayed disk of the summer sun. Our present text concerns itself only with disciples and their power to call to mind former states of existence.

"The devotee, then, who tries for the first time to call to mind former states of existence, should choose a time after breakfast, when he has returned from collecting alms, and is alone and plunged in meditation, and has been absorbed in the four trances in succession. On rising from the fourth trance, which leads to the higher powers, he should consider the event which last took place, namely, his sitting down; next the spreading of the mat; the entering of the room; the

putting away of bowl and robe; his eating; his leaving the village; his going the rounds of the village for alms; his entering the village for alms; his departure from the monastery; his offering adoration in the courts of the shrine and of the Bodhi tree; his washing the bowl; what he did between taking the bowl and rinsing his mouth; what he did at dawn; what he did in the middle watch of the night; what he did in the first watch of the night. Thus he must consider all that he did for a whole day and night, going backwards over it in reverse order.

"As much as this is plain even to the ordinary mind, but it is exceedingly plain to one whose mind is in preliminary concentration. But if there is any one event which is not plain, then he should once more enter upon the trance which leads to the higher powers, and when he has risen from it, he must again consider that past event; this will suffice to make it as plain as if he had used a lighted lamp.

"In the same reverse order he must consider what he did the day before, the day before that, up to the fifth day, the tenth day, a fortnight ago, a month ago, a year ago; and having in the same manner considered the previous ten and twenty years, and so on up to the time of his conception in this birth, he must then consider the name and form which he had at the moment of death in his last birth. A skilled devotee is able at the first attempt to penetrate beyond conception, and to take as his object of thought the name and form which he had at the moment of death in his last birth. But since the name and form of the last birth came quite to an end, and were replaced by others, this point of time is like thick darkness, and difficult to be made out by the mind of any person still deluded. But even such a one should not despair, nor say: 'I shall never be able to penetrate beyond conception, or to take as the object of my thought the name and form which I had in my last birth, at the moment of death,' but he should again and again enter the trance which leads to the higher powers, and each time he rises from the trance, he should again intend his mind upon that point of time.

"Just as a strong man in cutting down a mighty tree to be used as the peaked roof of a pagoda, if the edge of his axe be turned in lopping off the branches and twigs, will not despair of cutting down

the tree, but will go to an iron-worker's shop, have his axe sharpened, return, and go on with his cutting; and if the edge of his axe be turned a second time, he will a second time have it sharpened, and return, and go on with his cutting; and since nothing that he has chopped once needs to be chopped again, he will in no long time, when there is nothing left to chop, fell that mighty tree. In the same way the devotee rising from the trance that leads to the higher powers, without considering what he has already considered once, and considering only the moment of conception, in no long time will penetrate beyond the moment of conception, and take as his object the name and form which he had at the moment of death, in his last birth.

"His alert attention having become possessed of this knowledge, he can call to mind many former states of existence, as, one birth, two births, three births, four births, five births, and so on, in the words of the text."

So far, the teaching. It will be seen to depend wholly on what we are accustomed to call the association of ideas: the principle, in virtue of which, when two ideas are received in connection with each other, the evocation of one tends to call up the other also. Thus the starting-point is in every case the present moment, and the disciple is to consider this moment, in order to evoke the impression which directly preceded it; this new mind-image is next to be held in view, in order that the mental picture joined on to it at the other end, so to speak, should next be brought into the centre of the mind's field of view. This process is to be repeated until the whole colored ribbon printed with the events of the past four-and-twenty hours has been drawn back again before the mind's eye. But the ribbon is not separated nor broken off at this point; it is joined to a like ribbon of yesterday; to reach the end of one is to find the beginning of another.

Now we are ready to come to another aspect of the matter. During the last few years, evidence has been accumulating on all hands to show that we never really forget anything. We have rediscovered the memory of the subconscious mind. One way in which this manifests itself is in the mesmeric or somnambulistic sleep, where pictures and images hopelessly beyond recall for the habitual mind come to the

surface in fragments or whole series, as the case may be. The classical story is that of the servant-maid who, falling into a trance, repeated long passages of Hebrew and Greek and Latin. Careful investigation for a long time failed to suggest any explanation, until it was discovered that she had years before been attendant on a learned divine, who was in the habit of reading aloud in these dead tongues; the girl, quite unconsciously, had absorbed long trains of sounds quite meaningless to her, and these were stored up faithfully and indelibly in her subjective memory, till the hour of trance came, when her secret treasure-house was unlocked.

Now comes the application. The Buddhists of twenty-five hundred years ago, like the Indian occultists for ages before that, were perfectly familiar with all that we know of the subjective mind, and with much that we have not yet guessed. They had discovered all that is implied in this story of the servant-maid who talked Greek and Hebrew, and, more than that, they had found the key to the hidden cabinet, and could open it at will. They knew the secret of "the trances leading to the higher powers," and could acquire the power of entering them at will; their monasteries were nothing but great colleges of practical psychology, where this and much more was taught; but there was one indispensable condition precedent to entering these colleges of occultism; perfect disinterestedness and charity, typified by an act of renunciation after which the devotee bound himself to touch no money, to live on alms only, on food freely offered by those who had faith in his work.

This charity and disinterestedness, this detachment from the fortunes of the present personality, alone furnishes the condition of mind and soul in which the trances can be entered at will; the same mood must be present in some degree for the trances to be entered at all. There must be a renunciation, if only for a time. There must be a letting go, a loosening of that greed and graspingness which thoroughly dominate the ordinary man and the ordinary life. It is the old story of the magic-lantern; the lights must be turned out first. Therefore the devotee or disciple spoken of in the Buddhist texts is one who has this disinterestedness, who can rise above the graspingness of his present personality, and who can, therefore, find

the doorway to his subjective mind, his subconscious memory. The very words of the text prove that this, and nothing else, is meant; for, if the devotee break down in his reversed chain of memory, what is he directed to do ? To enter the trance again; that is, to withdraw once more from the disturbing sense of his outward surroundings, in order that the memories of his subjective mind, of quite different texture, as they are, may be able to print themselves on his mental vision.

Once more, this association of memories, with the power of catching the links of association so as to pull the colored ribbons back through the mind, is a faculty which improves enormously by practice. The greatest modern teacher of Mnemonics bases his whole system on this one thing: the constant exercise of the memory on chains of naturally associated words and sounds, and those who apply his system find that their memories are thereby so strengthened that they can apply the added power in any direction, not merely in the direction in which it has first been exercised.

What happens is this: the mind's eye is trained to focus itself correctly on the mind-pictures, which are as real as stones and trees, but of a different order of reality; and the power once gained, the mind's eye can come to focus on different links of association; and can thus clearly see the picture next to any picture already before its vision. Once the mind's eye is trained to focus correctly on these finer images, it is only a matter of diligence to draw back before its vision the pictures of a year ago, or of two, five or ten years ago. The condition for success is, that the mental eye shall not be put out of focus by intending itself upon the coarser images of material and selfish desires; that is, desires concerned only with the animal body. For however good these may be in their own place, they are unquestionably of a quite different quality from the mind-pictures we are dealing with, and the mind cannot be focussed for both at once.

It is just the same in optics. If you wish to use a telescope for the study of the stars, you must use a particular eyepiece and a definite focus; if you wish to look at your neighbor's cabbage-garden you must change eyepiece and focus. It is no disparagement of cabbages to say they are not stars; but the fact remains, that the

nature of the cabbage is one thing, while the nature of the star is another. So with mind-images; they are of different orders, and the mind cannot be focussed for both at once. Therefore we see that, so far as the present birth is concerned, there is nothing in the Buddhist scripture which we cannot understand and believe; and, what is more, there is nothing in it which we cannot verify.

Now to come to the much larger question: the memory of past births. The mind-chains of the present birth are, as we saw, complete; but not in the physical mind of the outward personality. They are complete in the subjective mind of the psychical self, the door to which is opened in trance, whether involuntary, as in the case of the servant-maid, or intentionally and consciously entered, as in that of the Buddhist devotee. The psychical mind-pictures, forming an unbroken ribbon, are all perfectly visible to the psychical self; but they can only leak into the consciousness of the physical self in broken fragments, in such rags and shreds of memory as you have, say of a given month ten years ago. Yet the mesmerist could unlock from your mind an unbroken picture of that month, or of any month, up to the moment your personal consciousness began in the present birth.

Just as the ribbon of mind-pictures is complete in the subjective mind of the psychical self, so that all the episodes of a lifetime are there indelibly recorded, so the episodes of that larger life, in which birth and death are but as day and night, are recorded indelibly in that deeper and more subjective memory which belongs to the causal and immortal self, who stands behind physical and psychic alike. And these memories can only be reached in one way: by rising up above the psychical and animal instincts which limit us to the material self; and then by ascending higher, above all the personal and individual limitations which tie us to the psychic self; by doing this habitually, the vision of the causal self will be so trained and strengthened that it will be able easily to overleap the chasm of death, and to take up the memories which lie beyond the tomb.

It is not my intention to go deeper into this question here; but enough has been said to make it clear that the devotee, the Eastern occultist, who dwells retired from the world, in stillness and alone, may

yet be exercising faculties of tremendous importance and power, not only to his own signal benefit, but also to the benefit of the whole human race. To the study and disinterested work of these Eastern sages is due the fact that the real science of the soul is still within the possession of mankind; our material races would have lost it utterly. If it be asked what these sages have given us out of their treasure, let me answer: they have given us, among other things, this very doctrine of reincarnation, which alone makes intelligible the darkest riddles of human life; which alone gives us present knowledge of our immortality.

I have outlined the manner in which, as a matter of fact, this doctrine did come to our day and generation. It came, for us, through the message of a woman, much maligned and traduced in her life, but who, nevertheless, put her testimony on record. Where did she get it? She herself persistently made answer: from the Eastern sages, who spoke what they did know, and testified to the things their own eyes had witnessed; to those who, treading in the path of the occultists of old, of the sages of the Upanishads, and the latter Buddhist devotees, had actually recovered the memory of their former births, and could tell of that past which we call forgotten, but which, for them, was very well remembered. It is only in the present day that our races of the West have so far given up their faith in fire and brimstone, as the one satisfactory answer to life's riddle, have so far surrendered the crude and crass materialism which followed after that, as to be radey once more to hear the world-old teaching. And the moment the world was ready, the doctrine was once more publicly taught. For so our needs are provided for, and humanity is safe-guarded far better than mankind guesses, or could understand.

Nor in truth has the tradition of past births, and of our grander memories which embrace them, been quite hidden from any race at any time. It is spoken of in that episode of Virgil's epic which, on the testimony of all antiquity, presents dramatically the themes of the Greater Mysteries. It has echoes in Plato, who speaks of the waters of that mystical Lethe which washed from men's minds the memories of bygone sorrows, so that they might once more have the courage to take up the heavy burden of life; but some there be

who, in Plato's teaching, drink less deep of Lethe, and so remember. Among the Jews this doctrine of rebirth was held as a mystery-teaching of the Kabbalists, who taught that the same pure spirit was embodied in Adam and David, and should return again in the Messiah, who was therefore, in a mystical sense, the son of David, and the second Adam. They held also that the soul of Japhet, son of Noah, was the same as that of Simeon; that Terah was reborn as Job.

Among the older races, in the temples of Chaldea and Egypt, and most of all in India, the same teaching held; and, coming to European lands, we find it in the schools of the Druids. No other doctrine has ever been so universally accepted; nor could it ever have been so accepted but for the presence in all schools of those who did remember, and who spoke what they knew. All the greatest teachers made this claim; we have seen the Buddha make it; we have seen it made by Krishna; what other meaning can we give to those mysterious words: Before Abraham was, I am ?